GONE TO SEED

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Cascadia Urban-Rural Coalition

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Foreword

Our little gang of crazy cascadians has been doing our thing for three and a half years now. This grand experiment in commons growing, network shaping, land connecting, system building, embedded within our larger Seattle and regional ecology of mutual aid and other groups has existed for long enough, and has made progress on and/or learned limits on enough of our hazy goals that we feel the time is ripe for some retrospection. Some introspection. Some sporulation of our blueprint and culture and lessons learned. We've spent the last few years, and especially the last season, in increasingly internal states of relationship and spirit deepening which has aligned nicely with this zine, and want to note that this project has been just as internal and messy as external and programmatic. And this is as it should be. Because we're not intellectuals seeking to view the world through a theory. We exist in the soil of the Snoqualmie valley and the grime of Seattle and are just as real and nonlinear as vine maple's branches.

At this point we've achieved some part of our vision to build a network of folks able to support the development of culture and sharing (read:anticapitalist) economy where we are. We've brought thousands of labor-hours to local farms and projects (especially bipoc, but also plenty of white) and made friends in locales very different from Seattle, who are growing food or hemp or other or fighting imperialism or who are working on new-old technologies. We've materially and familialy supported specific indigenous elders in sustaining old and relevant knowledge and practices. We've opened up commons in the city that help people meet their current material needs, and we've hosted learning spaces in which folks learn new-old self(and community)-sustaining skills. We've gone to the forest river and desert in a spiritual way and heard old story. We have gifted and been gifted in pechelth (potlatch), and we have danced and sung Coast Salish songs.

The larger world has also evolved to a new place. The climate metacrisis continues to advance and the Pax Americana continues to erode, leading to an environment that seems for the time being increasingly violent and unstable. This hasn't changed our praxis, as we believe: collapse or no collapse, decolonizing, local resilience and decoupling from global capitalism is the move.

We offer this zine to readers near and far in a spirit of retrospection and to spread our blueprint and lessons learned to fertile soil. Cuz based on the feedback we've gotten, while our group is by no means perfect, the idea of growing local material systems as well as culture resonates with many of the people, rural and urban, of any demographic under the sun, who really live on this land, and who understand that there is no right or wrong: there is only (r)evolution.

Principles & Program

"CURC is committed to the anarchist principles of horizontal power structures, without a crippling phobia of hierarchy. Thus we aim to form affinity groups whose size, geographically and numerically, is limited by the ability for everyone to know each other; to be able to say that all in the group have some relationship with each other. This is tribal logic. People naturally self-regulate in small dynamic power structures through mechanisms that are emergent rather than designed. We hope to tap that wisdom through the principle that small is beautiful.

We also hope to be motivated in some sense by feeling rather than structure. What really drives us is the love of land and desire to do the things required to sustain our existence in a regenerative way rather than an extractive one. In other words, this isn't an organization but a movement."

The above was written approximately four years ago, and we've stayed true to these concepts. What makes CURC is truly the relationships, whether among fam in the Seattle scene, our friendships and partnerships around labor and care, or our organizing core, which has grown from five to ten people since publishing volume I of our zine. It's been familial and tribal. We've grown slowly, erratically, and unpredictably. Rather than instating a formal membership process, we've grown organically, adding members who have demonstrated commitment through showing up and fitting the vibe, intellectually and culturally. As we've grown, it became more important to outline our expectations of each other and think critically about diversity, both of identity as well as personality or each member's unique offerings and strengths. Our internal ethnic and gender diversity was pretty satisfactory: this is a very queer community and we (organizing members are ~50% whites 50% POC, around half from cascadia half from elsewhere) put a lot of effort into making sure there was ethnic diversity more for ourselves and this movement than for any quota. Although starting from a place of anarchist praxis, we have welcomed members and worked with many others without restriction of participation to those who hold a specific ideology.

An earlier version of these Principles was initially published in Volume 1, over 3 years ago. Here, we add Programs to outline the main ways we have acted on those Principles. It's these Principles & Programs which the rest of the zine will report on.

Principles

- Abiding connection to and respect for the Land we call home and all the Peoples, human and non-human, that inhabit it (land-consciousness)
- A commitment to racial equity, community sovereignty, decolonization that is power-building in nature and opposes reliance on the state
- Work together, party together; relationship and ritual - connection & affection
- Build decommodified local economy and culture that regeneratively serves the social reproduction
- Small is beautiful
- Militant defense of people and place
- Garf On Them Haters

Program

- Aid the establishment of settlement and land use practices in cascadia that support a healthy human existence and a sustainable relationship with the Land and the life it supports, our living siblings: work parties, land trusts/communal land ownership models
- Facilitate relations as well as material and cultural exchange between local rural and urban populations
- Emphasis on aiding bipoc spaces
- Experimenting with economy (from the Greek *oikonomos*, management of the home, dwelling, place): work shares, cooperatives, gift economy
- Popular education and visioning: zines, propaganda, reading circles
- Direct support for Indigenous sovereignty:
- Rebuilding the commons–an ancient and essential human technology: mending circles
- Community self-sufficiency: skillshares
- Local and bioregional governance, relearning the art and skill of communal or consensual governance and decision making
- Ritual, spirituality, land-oriented culture

Being Bioregional

My first experience with gathering mollusks was wading up to my thighs in the salt water, rushing into and filling my pointless boots, at the mouth of the Dosewallips on a frigid February morning. I leaned down to pick up stray oysters, sleeves soaking wet, bringing a collection back to shore for my partner to shuck. Fog lay on the water, sun piercing through clouds every once in a while, illuminating the magic of receiving these gifts.

Sitting on the couch in our warm apartment that night, I was hyper aware that just 10 feet away from me were a huddle of little beings, abductor muscles severed from their shells, sitting in a plastic tupperware inside the fridge. I felt guilty, selfish, like all the connectedness I had felt on the beach when encountering these beings for the first time so intimately had been a mistake, just another act of human destructiveness. What right did I have to harvest other beings in a world where my species is already constantly taking so much?

Gary Snyder helped open a portal for me out of this thinking. He writes in *The Place, The Region, and The Commons:*

> "**There are tens of millions of people in North America who were physically born here but who are not actually living here <u>intellectually</u>, <u>imaginatively</u>, or <u>morally</u>**."

What I was craving an understanding of during points of tension in my shellfishing practice was how to harvest in a way that felt holistic, part of a greater practice of right relation. The dominant culture wants to absolve this tension by removing sacredness to frame fishing solely as "recreation", by obscuring answers about why clams buried around urban centers are so poisoned they are unsafe to eat. It is up to us to develop the communal, cultural practices that will sustain our whole world– the water, the mollusks, and ourselves.

This is what CURC is living for, to establish an awareness and practice of place here in Cascadia, primarily in Ish River Country where much of our energy has resided so far. This collection of practices is what we have come to understand for ourselves as bioregionalism:

- **Knowledge** // *living here intellectually*
    - building ecological awareness through learning the names & stories of the beings around us as well as observing, listening
    - understanding what it takes to feed ourselves, participating to localize our agricultural economy and feed each other
    - nurturing relationships with elders who teach the stories of this place

- **Creativity** // *living here imaginatively*
    - envisioning a liberated society is a creative act. within our community we've practiced prioritizing care & rest, repair & transformation during conflict
    - hosting skillshares as a space for free, horizontal skill building with no experts
    - making art, like zines or vessels of foraged materials
- **Ethics** // *living here morally*
    - learning how to live in right relation in a principled way within the world
    - supporting other land stewards in their work
    - developing intimate spirituality, both through new traditions and old rituals which strengthen our moral commitments

This past winter we took around 30 people out to tuwaduq sidaqʷ (Hood Canal), primarily to dig for littleneck clams and oysters. Our explicit goal was to grow a culture and tradition of shellfishing within our community based in reverence, community sufficiency, and harvesting as part of an ethic of reciprocity informed by ecology. Squatted in huddles on the beach, raking rocky sand, we encouraged each other to talk to the clams as we dug them up, to say a few words of introduction.

We prepared the shellfish together. I knew from my experience of being self-taught how tense the moment of cooking live creatures can be, and it felt important to do it together. Again, Snyder passes on the knowledge: "The Ainu say that the deer, salmon, and bear like our music and are fascinated by our languages. So we sing to the fish or game, speak words to them, say grace…Nonhuman nature, I cannot help feeling, is well inclined toward humanity, and only wishes modern people were more reciprocal, not so bloody." At the picnic shelter, many hands built fire, tended simmering pots, scrubbed the clams while quizzing each other on species ID. Stories about our homes were swapped, spoons dipping into the broth for a taste to make sure it was just right. Subsistence, celebration, sacrament. Interbeing through eating.

This is how CURC has developed our own bioregional ethic: when I say "our own" ethic, it's not that our beliefs or outlook are necessarily new or unique in the lineage of folks who have thought about this land, for which one place-name is Cascadia. I mean it is our own because it is literally *ours*, we practice it with each other, we strengthen our ties to the place by strengthening our ties to each other.

We need each other to build traditions, to practice practices. We need each other to *be here.* When you dig clams, the smell of the beach stays on your hands for sometimes nearly a whole day. It's a pungent smell. When you are bringing the shells up to scoop the flesh into your mouth, you smell the beach still on your fingers. Teachings are everywhere. Being bioregional means opening yourself up to the mystery of receiving them.

It's Our Party, We Can Work If We Want To

9am on a cold, June morning; mist of the Snoqualmie River clung to the valley floor like a newborn grasps a finger. Vehicles three, four riders deep had begun their procession into the gravel lot at Terrebonne Farm. Their occupants spilled out, mingled for a minute, coalescing eventually into a circle of names, pronouns, and the all-important icebreaker (today: If you were a bug, where would you choose to live?). Off in the distance, the roar of a diesel beast, growing closer, louder, until through a gap in the cottonwoods its Deere-green carapace appeared, and at its helm, Farmer Tom.

Following him to the field, we unloaded a menagerie of vegetable starts from the front of the tractor and placed them in clusters, a sea of cauliflower, collards, fennel, mustard greens, and kale taking shape. Amoeba-like, we broke into small groups, 22 people becoming blobs of four, maybe five, in a state of constant flux as new task or overheard conversation pulled one person to another to another to another. Many of us showed up as strangers, but in the shared act of plunging hands into soil an effortless camaraderie emerges. Mutual passions rise like cream as fresh acquaintances join in the frenzied exploration of common ground. With so many hands, one is able to find the balance between working, commiserating, and simply pausing to listen to the song sparrows. Over the following hours, we planted dozens of trays of starts and weeded mounds of bindweed from between the rows, accomplishing before noon what would take Farmer Tom alone a week or more.

When the work wrapped up, we moved to a gazebo near the orchard where some aunties had assembled a meal of hearty turkey chili, corn bread, grapes, watermelon, and quinoa salad. Friendships cemented over rapidly emptying bowls, satisfied laughter ringing from the pitched roof. As we finished our meals, we walked back to the field where Farmer Tom offered us all as many starts as we wanted. With hands and hearts full, another successful work party had wrapped up.

CURC was founded on the idea of building bioregional connection, community, resilience, and power (while always being groovy and having fun with it), seen initially through the lens of foodshed. In other words, food connects us to soil, floodplain, and weather patterns; to local production and agrarian communities; to each other, our cultures, and our bodies. In our conception, creating a robust, hyper-local food network is a primary task in building community-level power. When people control essential resources, they wrest back autonomy, and food is an obvious resource to start with.

The work party was conceived as a way in which we could have a direct material impact on foodshed while learning new skills and growing in reciprocal relationship with rural peoples and land. Key to the concept is that "party" holds as much weight as "work". There is often music, a merry vibe, and sometimes

some mind-expanders. Enough of the stuffy materialist revolutionary zealots who love the scent of their own farts and are in constant competition for ideological purity. Building the better world should be joyous and weird. Emma Goldman's dancing and all that.

It took a little while for work parties to get off the ground. We started by looking up organic veggie farms in the area and sending out a boatload of emails with our pitch: Come let us do some work for you. Most were skeptical, but some were interested. At first, it was just us and a few of our friends. To recruit more people, we started attending existing volunteer days at urban farms and food projects and making the other half of our pitch: leave the city with us. Slowly, the number of work partiers increased, as did our reputation amongst the farmers we sought to build relationships with. As trust grew, we were introduced to more and more projects, expanding our reach from south of Tahoma to up near the canadian border, and beyond foodshed to include things like salmon habitat restoration, wool processing, and hemp harvesting. Four years into this experiment, our work parties now commonly exceed 25 people, allowing us to complete a tremendous amount of tasks in a relatively short time.

Importantly, however, our work parties are not meant as a form of charity. The intent is that they are fully reciprocal, with the idea that we will be served a meal at the least, and are usually sent home with vegetables, starts, wool, cannabis, berries, or other products of the farm we're helping. This is for a number of reasons – human relationship generally isn't built on charity, we're not liberals, etc – yet ultimately because we envision work parties not purely as something that college-educated young people with surplus time do on the weekends to feel good about themselves but as a genuine alternative to a system of wage-slavery and corporate grocery stores, where someone can give a few hours of their time, get fed, and get the veggies they need for the upcoming week. In its most ideal form, we wouldn't be working on non-profit or private farms, but instead commonly farmed land.

It's worth noting that reciprocal does not mean transactional. This isn't about a 1-to-1 value exchange. Rather, reciprocal relationships are about mutually-enthusiastic support, undergirded by love and respect. The kernel of CURC was built from a friendship between a rural farmer and an urban worker, meaning that transactional labor relationships are besides the point. The good vibes matter because there isn't necessarily a coercive measure: the farmer WANTS to grow good food, and to provide lunch for visiting workers, the workers WANT to support them, the people WANT to do right by the land. This model works best when practiced in good faith.

As this all continues to grow, we are looking to start encouraging more work-trades between partiers and farmers. It's ideal for us that some people who come out to a work party become enamored with a particular project and want to give dedicated time to that space. We consider CURC to be a mycelial organization, with work parties one of the ways we distribute resources through

the hyphal network, and it's always been our intention that folks would break off from us having felt called to develop a deeper sense of place with somewhere we have connected them to. We also hope to compile a list of local farms offering work-trades that can be shared around.

This has certainly been an imperfect experiment. Some major issues we have run into include: our base is still mostly that college-educated young person with surplus time; we have struggled with finding a consistent model for how to deal with for-profit farms and our technically unpaid labor (resulting in us frequently working with the same assortment of non-profit farms which has its own issues); not always making clear to the people who come out why the particular project we're working on is important, leading to some very critical feedback; taking a couple years to better prioritize accessibility; organizing primarily through instagram; growing stagnant at times with the new farms/projects we're connecting with and similarly staying too close to the urban core too often.

We hope this inspires you to adopt this model in your resident bioregion. There is still so much for us to all learn, but there are also a lot of badass people doing really cool shit that could use more hands, and this is one way we can grow our knowledge, bodies, camaraderie, and community on a distributed basis. If you do start doing work parties and have questions/feedback for us, hit us up: cascadiaurc@gmail.com / cascadiaurc@riseup.net

How to organize a work party CURC style:

- Connect with a farmer at least a week in advance and determine their needs and capacity (i.e they have work and food for 12 people)
    - When connecting with a new farm, we will often send a few members out for a smaller, initial work party in order to suss out the vibes and make sure this is someone we want to be in relationship with
- Get all relevant info from them (when, what are we doing, what's the terrain, are there easily accessible restrooms on site, do they have things like gloves and water, etc)
- Make a post with all of the above info and link to a sign-up form (we use signup genius)
- In addition to contact info and location, make sure to ask on the form about transportation (who needs a ride/who can drive others)
- A day before your party, go through the sign-up sheet and connect riders and drivers
- We break our organizers up into those who will be leading/interfacing with the farmer most, who will be documenting, who will be organizing rides, and general support
    - "Interfacing with the farmer" essentially means serving as a mediator/translator, making sure that tasks are understood and that everyone knows what they're doing. Farmers are not always prepared to deal with a large group of people, many of whom are 'untrained'
- Day of, have folks circle up to stretch and share names, pronouns, icebreaker
- From there, do what needs doing, have fun, break bread, and go home happy

Prayer for Connection

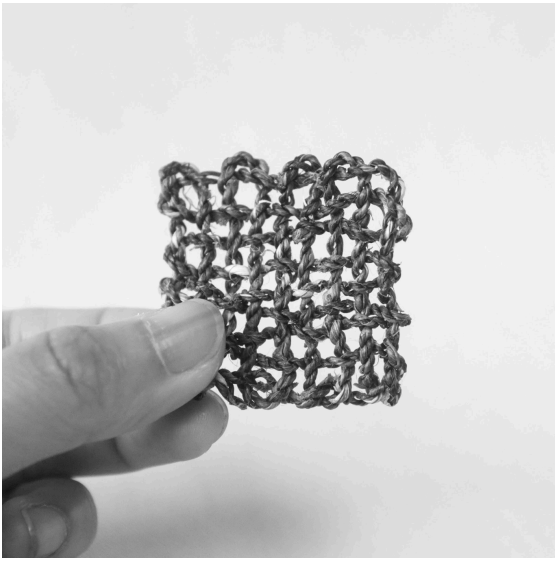
I am weak, but the network is strong.
I am uncertain, but the future is open.
I am unworthy, but this love is not founded in deserving.

May we use what we have been given, though it's not much,
May we learn to honor the land, sick as it is, sick as we are,
May our hands find each other in the dark, and burn away what divides us.

If our blood spills may it be a binding
If our tears fall may they water the garden
If our pain overwhelms us may we expand to be more than it.

May your breath carry your intention
May your anger shine with destroying light
May you hold your heart gently in your chest

next to mine, as we plant the seeds
To bring a new way of being into this world.
May we be as we are & keep changing.



Rest & Labor

Grind culture affects everything we do: we rush through forming relationships so we can get to the secure parts, we sleep eight hours and only at night, we plan meals based on caloric intake and nutrient density over enjoyment. We're told to do it all alone, in as short a time as we can. Our options for breaks are dehumanizing at best, and further support the atomization of individuals, commodifying capitalist structures, and colonialism attempting to "civilize" the remaining wild places.

If we only know how to grind, we only know how to operate within its hierarchies; therefore if we approach our collective care with the ethos of the grind, we are replicating the modes of the capitalist and the white supremacist systems into radical spaces. For our work to be liberating the way we do the work must also look different. Ultimately, it's not enough to stop for a little while - escaping the grindset hinges on deconstructing its oppressive nature that permeates every aspect of our lives.

We can move beyond grind culture by forming an alternate labor relationship, one which does not value the products of our labor over our bodies. When we rest, we can break the urgency of its routines and open space for care, play, spiritual and emotional well-being. When we rest, we can honor our bodies as more than machines and our work as more than the production of commodities.

Learning to rest often means slowing way the fuck down. Listening to the little signals of your body so you can stop before you collapse. Taking time to stretch, breathe, and drink water. Taking the time to notice not just what is around you, but what possibilities it creates. Forming deep relationships over months and years, learning to ask for help, finding fulfillment in the process rather than the product. And not taking on more just because there's more to get done.

There will always be more work. To optimize oneself toward it infinitely is to give in to the will of the oppressor. Labor and its outcomes can bring great value to our lives (value that has nothing to do with the accumulation of capital), but if we never appreciate that value, we may as well not have it at all. Labor strengthens our minds, bodies, and bonds with one another. Working for a collective future makes our hope more tangible, less fleeting. When we pull away from the grindset we begin to find room for the other kinds of work - the work of grief, the work of building connection. By integrating rest into our labor practices, rather than holding them at opposite ends of a spectrum, we create a new relationship, one that values both the human beings and the products of their labor more highly.

Rest is not only necessary for “labor fuel,” but for recalibration. We can find profound mental clarity on why we want to stay connected with the Land. Imagine ourselves while sitting in the foggy stillness of silent serenity, between the oak trees, and atop of a bed of twigs while our friends forage mushrooms a few hundred feet away from us. This is a way we may find rest through meditation. To speak for myself, times like those gave me the space for a greater perspective of what it means to be or do anything.

There is no secret to finding rest. Your body needs sleep, space and silence, and to put it simply, you need to just start seeking these things out. Community meals, bartering services with friends, meditation, and slowing down in daily life are all opportunities to rest. In building community, care can come from many places, and being open to it rather than reliant on the structures we are comfortable in allows us to build and experience new labors of love. These can take many forms, like family meals, tea with a friend, helping one another clean, or shared creative time. One way we do this as a CURC collective is to host what we call 'salons' during the winter months. Salons serve as a healing space and a space to process the year and reflect on our long term visions. What did we do? Why? Was it something we want to do again next year?

We rest seasonally so that we may balance our labor with reflection. We rest daily to reclaim our bodies from the grind. We seek out spaces balanced by rest and labor, which value all forms of labor and of life, because this diversity is what carries us not just through the years but through centuries.

Let us allow ourselves to be still so we may listen to the silence. It may reward us with thoughts and answers we couldn't hear before. It may help us recognize we are already free, and show us ways of living that honor our bodies and the land.

> "Our lives will not be sweated from birth until life closes;
> Hearts starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but give us roses"
> - James Oppenheim, *Bread & Roses*

> "Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy. Both these toxic systems refuse to see the inherent divinity in human beings and have used bodies as a tool for production, evil, and destruction for centuries.”
> - Tricia Hersey, *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto*

Are you reading this?

We express ourselves through poetry, essay, and visual art. As you likely already know, the zine is the anarchist publication method of choice because it's cheap to print, digestible, and easy to distribute. Ours is heavy on self-expression as a contribution to the culture, to spirit, to art, partly because we believe that to live in this place in a right way is ultimately a spiritual and cultural question, so our poetry and art and prayer being caught up in the blood of this land and in longstanding human lifeways is a contribution to the consciousness of the human population here. To a lesser extent it contains analytical and worldbuilding essays. The foreword typically contains a reportback on what the group has been up to that past season. As a group with no land and no infrastructure the zine is important as our space and an archive for others and ourselves, especially as family is constantly getting evicted - RIP BLMG, Nurturing Roots Beacon Hill, Qantuta.

From the beginning, our zine has been a gathering of contributions from both folks in the group and members of our difficult-to-define community in and around Seattle: activists, farmers, repairers, poets, lovers.

In formatting and editing we've mostly used google docs to coordinate. Assembling has been a manual effort. These steps take longer than you think, so leave adequate time if you're trying to write your own zine – the overall process takes about 2.5-4 months from deciding theme to printing. We've printed and assembled our zines in various ways, relying most often on friends and community for riso printers and distro networks. Our friends at Pipsqueak and Reclaim Clay Collective are good examples. These are community spaces where we've hosted events and used their printers to make and fold our zines at cheaper rates than private-owned shops would charge.

Even though we get lots of help from our friends, it does cost some money to print these zines. We've just handled the money stuff by fronting some ourselves and by asking for optional donations when we distribute zines, patches, or posters at community events (like mutual aid fairs). On one particularly memorable occasion our friends from the excellent–now defunct–band Your Son the Professor threw a benefit show for us.

Our zine is a world where we analyze, report, rage, pray, envision, whatever we want, in a way that is grounded in place. How it's funded, printed, and put together is a step toward making our shared dream of a world without imposed borders and mandated structures of capitalism. It took many hands and meandering paths of gift and reciprocity to bring this project to life. It is the seed we offer to you.

Skillshares

Twisting, chopping, sewing, mending
A circle of friends new and old
Coming together to bring new life
to things others might discard
Skills shared, memories made
The love is stored in the moments we share

Urban life as a whole is incredibly isolating and often we find ourselves detached from simple, approachable skills that would have been considered basic, fundamental knowledge just a generation ago. Today, such essential skills are specialized as siloed trades (like carpentry) or individualized as hobbies which require privileges like excess time or money to access ("homesteading"). Additionally, we've lost the "right to repair", expected to to spend thousands of dollars every couple of years for some highly engineered device that is nearly if not impossible to repair and even most clothes are designed to fall apart after a few wears.

So what about those of us who can't afford or simply can't stand this reality? We organize skillshares. Through skillshares, we re-collectivize knowledge that was once widely shared both spatially (amongst communities) and temporally (generationally). Capitalism demands that knowledge be seen as property: property to be individually held and administered by specialists. By facilitating a platform through which we freely and openly share knowledge, skills, and materials, we decentralize and disseminate knowledge that we are told must live with individuals and institutions. Knowledge, like food, shelter, and water, is an abundant resource, if only we learn how to share it.

Mending, repairing, and maintaining what you already own builds both individual and community power and truly should be considered a revolutionary act in and of itself. It's been great to watch the mending circle groups continue to expand and to watch people gain confidence in skills they thought they never had and spend time in community. I hope as we continue to cultivate and grow our own skills to further connect with others who are willing to share what they know.

Below is a list of skillshares we have offered or vision to offer some day.

- Fishing
- Fermentation
- Repairing electronics
- Mushroom cultivation
- Blacksmithing
- Hunting + dressing
- Animal husbandry
- Reading the sky (weather, navigation)
- Composting + vermiculture
- Permaculture
- Herbalism
- Weaving with plant fibers
- Plant ID hikes
- Strength-building
- Bike repair

Past and Future

We push away dogma to pull in endless experimentation and iteration. As mycelium, new nodes are constantly branching, old matter decomposing, fresh soil produced: transformation of rot to growth. Looking back on the last four years, we can say a few things about what has and hasn't worked for us and where we would like to go, an offering of self-critique for our collective knowledge.

Since the beginning, our primary program has been work parties. While we have been effective at strengthening our foodshed through mobilizing labor to support community-focused farm projects, some farmers we supported early on need less help now that they're established, some have lost their land, and some partnerships we pulled away from as we realized that we were not value-aligned enough. We have developed several fruiting relationships with farms, but not as many — and not as deeply — as we would have liked. We have struggled to balance being more exploratory (sending small work parties out of the Greater Seattle area to connect with farmers of broader Cascadia) with having consistent, accessible work parties for the farms we are already in relationship with. It has also been an iterative process to understand our duty as organizers to ensure community labor is used responsibly (workers are walking away with something and their free labor is not just creating profit for the farmer). Building relationships takes time. It's been a tradeoff between a material program and a friendship/spiritual group, and defining what moving away from volunteerism and towards mutual aid looks like in this space.

It's worth interrogating what we have materially gained after this time: we have no land, no income or way to support ourselves without most of us working conventional jobs under capitalism, and despite prioritizing food work most of us still find ourselves buying the majority of our calories from supermarkets. We have intentionally turned down opportunities to pay ourselves (through grants/participation in the NPIC) for organizing work, which is a decision we stand by.

We've reflected on how to make this more materially sustainable for all of CURC (organizing core and beyond). One possible next step is workshares: a smaller group forms a relationship with a farmer and does recurring work on their project rather than one-off work parties. This builds a deeper relationship where more is possible. For example, a group of four could do four hours of work weekly at a particular farm and each receive a box of produce in return. They could do this for a whole season thus getting deeper learning for themselves and being of more use to the farmer.

The primary way we have sustained ourselves in this work and prevented burnout is through the gift *of* community and gifts *from* community. Core organizers are not the ones doing all the work here: a vibrant gift economy has popped up organically around us. At mending circles and skillshares, gifts of homegrown food, sourdough starter, and art are exchanged. Our community is filled with creative individuals who all want to support each other. We want to nurture this culture (facilitate trades between people who have different skills? always have free stuff to distro at events?) as another way we can provide for ourselves.

Despite being the urban-rural coalition, we also have not really become rural or decentralized. Our core organizing group lives in the heart of Seattle. Initially we envisioned affinity groups scattered in urban and rural areas throughout cascadia as part of the mycelial nature of the org... that has not happened. While some former members (they're still family) are truly rural or aspiring to be, we recognize it is a long process to build to that stage.

Some questions we have for ourselves: can we expect affinity groups to arise spontaneously, or is that something we need to put concerted effort into? Can the seed/spore of an affinity group be the ideas (see: this zine) or do members of our core need to leave Seattle and go to different places, and build groups from the ground up? Is it necessary and useful to spread our particular program and vision, or is the work more in building a network of similar spirit across cascadia?

Looking to the future, some of our long-term visioning includes: land occupation, supporting ourselves materially to detach our reliance on capitalism (worker coops?), establishing urban and rural home bases for our communities so that people can move between them. Perhaps building trade-oriented relationships with other communities, particularly the old and new land projects (communes, farms, etc.) around the bioregion, which would require either products or formalizing labor trades...CURC temp agency?

Fundamentally we have sought to build healthy social fabric that's not definitionally built around extraction and that is rooted in place. That's the crux here. Looking to the future is necessary, but whether we exist as an organization in a year is immaterial. What matters is our commitment to each other, not the thin membrane formed by concepts. What we will always remember are our gentle smiles and genuine goodbyes, tired from some good labor to keep our people fed, basking in the warm sun and new friendships as our feet sink into the deep rich soil. Groovy trips to grandfather cedars, greetings to the Columbia and Sammamish, stuffed carpools to the desert. Watching the Wallace River salmon spawn, whose dying moments are new life, the yearly breath of the continent, the renewal of our beloved Land.

To The Snoqualmie

O river
Where do you end
And I begin?

Is it in the Sound,
Where you greet the rest?
No for there I bathe, by
Blue water held and blessed

Not in the Cascades where
Your capillaries
Your million skybound streams
Move slow in icy clarities

Maybe then
At your great trunk
Where seeming torpor
Belies mischievous currents

Yet in your evening dance
Blossoms our sweet romance
And we act out your rhythms
In the movement of our bodies

- AM